SOME

THOUGHTS

UPON

Dr. *Sherlock*'s VINDICATION

OF THE

DOCTRINE

OF THE

Holy Trinity.

In a LETTER.

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SOME THOUGHTS UPON Dr. *Sherlock*'s VINDICATION, &c.

In a LETTER.

SIR,

SEeing you are pleased, That I should give you my Thoughts, about the Book lately set out by Dr. *Sherlock*; I am willing to comply with you therein, and to present you my Mind, with my ordinary Sincerity.

I observe, First, That it is no hard matter for a witty Man, to frame a fine close System, altogether free from Contradiction or false Reasoning. Metaphysicks do plentifully afford all sorts of Contrivances; and let a Man have never so little soundness of Mind, yet it's an easy thing for him to write in such a probable way, as is fit to dazle the Reader. *Plato*'s Philosophy being fruitful of Ideas and Abstractions, has been the first Womb, out of which such Methods have issued. The Sophisms of *Aristotle* did prevail afterwards; and at last our Modern Divines have been of opinion, that *Cartesius*'s Subtilties afforded the fittest means of freeing themselves from all the Incumbrances of their Mystery. So true it is, that the Sense Men have of Religion, depends in a great measure upon the Genius of the Philosophical Sect which they have embraced. Our Author has taken this last course, and I confess, his Scheme appear'd to me prettily contriv'd: But then it's not enough to frame a Close, but a well-grounded System. Divines are bound to lay a Foundation in Revelation; there it was therefore that I expected the Doctor, and there it is that I have fully discovered his Weakness.

The two Places of Scripture, which he brings in (*pag.* 51.) to prove the essential Unity of Father and Son, are these, *I and the Father are One: and the Father is in Me, and I am in him*, John 10. 30, 38. He assures us, that Christ spoke them in a sense of *Unity of Essence, and Nature*; and he pretends that the Jews took them in that very Sense, as he expresseth it (pag. 165.) *The Jews understood him to mean, that he was the Son of God by Na-*

Nature, and charged him with Blaſphemy for making himſelf God. And pag. 240. *Chriſt declared, I and my Father are One, which the Jews underſtood, (and they did not miſtake him in it) was to make himſelf God.* But how comes it that the Doctor has not perceived, that between thoſe two Paſſages which he cites, which are not at a great diſtance from one another, there is a Third which invalidates all his Proofs; and overthrows the curious Philoſophical Structure, which he pretends to build up? I mean the 35*th* and 36*th* Verſes of the ſame Chapter, ſet down preciſely between thoſe two Citations, where Chriſt moſt exactly explains to the Jews, in what ſenſe he had aſſerted, that he was one with his Father, or which is all one, after what manner he was God. *If he called them Gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken: Say ye of him, whom the Father has ſanctified, and ſent into the World, Thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God?* He does not ſay, I, whom the Father has begotten from all Eternity, of his own Subſtance, as he ſhould have ſaid, according to the Author's Mind: But I, whom the Father has ſanctified. Which plainly ſhews, that when he ſaid he was the Son of God, his meaning was, that he was ſo only in a ſenſe of Conſecration and of Miſſion, and conſequently that his Unity with the Father, is not an Eſſential and Natural Unity, as the Author pretends, but a meer Moral and Relative Unity, which conſiſts in the Equality of Works, not of Eſſence, which is abſolutely incommunicable. God imparts his Holineſs to the Faithful, whom he makes thereby *Partakers of his Divine Nature.* He hath imparted to Prophets and Kings his Authority, Knowledge and Power, as Chriſt ſays here: Why can't he then impart to his *Meſſias*, the *King of Kings*, and *the Prince of Prophets*, all his Vertues and all his Glory, in a more intimate Manner, and in a more eminent Degree, *without Meaſure* (as the Scripture hath it, *John* 3. 34.) and as much as a Man is capable of receiving from the Liberality and Almightineſs of him, by whom he is ſanctified and exalted? Different Degrees make no Alteration in the Nature and Poſſibility of a Thing: and that Supream Degree of Power and Glory, which was imparted to Chriſt, and is called in Scripture *the Fulneſs of the Godhead*, is the true Reaſon of his being ſtiled God.

Thus the Divinity of Chriſt is the ſame, not in Degree, but in Kind, with the Divinity of other Gods, whom God has ſanctified, that is to ſay, an imparted or communicated Divinity; ſeeing They and Chriſt are ſuch, becauſe the Supream God hath ſanctified and ſent them into the World, that is, furniſh'd them with Ability and Authority to act in his Name publickly among Men. Chriſt therefore explained himſelf moſt clearly, ſhewing to the Jews the Ground and Foundation of his Divinity. In effect, the only thing he was to prove againſt them, was, That he had not made himſelf equal to God in a blaſphemous Senſe, by uſurping any thing from God, belonging to his Eſſence or Attributes; but acknowledg'd, that he had his Divinity only from the Liberality, and Unction of him who is the Source of it; ſo that he was not the Son of God by a Communication of Eſſence, but of Gifts. The Compariſon, which he makes of himſelf with other Meſſengers of God, does not hinder him from being ſuch in a more Excellent Degree than the other, whom the Scripture dignifies with that Title. On the contrary, it does ſuppoſe it, as if he had ſaid, *How much more am I ſuch? I, I ſay, who am the greateſt and the nobleſt of the Lord's Anointed ones, if it be true that I am the Meſſias, as I do prove my ſelf to be by the Works, which I do in the Name of my Father which ſent me.* But at the ſame time, this Compariſon plainly ſhews, that he calls himſelf God, or the Son of God, upon the ſame Grounds that the others are ſtiled Gods by the Scripture, *viz.* becauſe the Father hath ſanctified him.

I come now more particularly to the matter in hand. The Author ſays, that thoſe Words, *I and the Father are One*, are to be underſtood *of an Unity of Eſſence and Nature*; that Chriſt ſpoke them in that ſenſe, and

and that the Jews put ſuch an Interpretation upon them: yet all the Divines that are on his ſide, when they are to explain this place, *Say ye that I Blaſpheme*, &c. ſay, that the Jews ſtood in no need of being taught all that Chriſt was, but that it was ſufficient for them to know, that he was the Son of God, in a manner Authorized by their Law, and ſuitable to their Capacities: So it is underſtood by the Learned Biſhop of *Chicheſter* (The Witneſſes.) *Chriſt*, ſays he, *juſtifies himſelf by a Reaſon, which ſignifies no more, but that he called himſelf the Chriſt, the Anointed of God. — And there was no need he ſhould ſay any thing of the Divine Nature that was in him.* Therefore I argue thus; If there was no need for the Jews to know, that Chriſt was the Son of God by Nature, why did he immediately before declare, that he and the Father are One by an Unity of Nature? Why did he teach that Fundamental Truth, that he is of the ſame Eſſence with the Father, Supream God as the Father? Was it not that they might underſtand what he taught them? And when they had underſtood him, why does he draw them off from their Underſtanding, by bringing in a Senſe of Unction and Sanctification, inſtead of a Senſe of Nature, that is to ſay, a Socinian Senſe inſtead of an Orthodox? If they took his Word in a Senſe of *Nature*, does he not undeceive them by ſubſtituting another, which is as remote from it, as Earth is from Heaven? Or rather does he not deceive them by leaping from one thing to another, by running into equivocal Terms to avoid their Fury, by telling them that this Term of *Son of God*, which he had at firſt inſinuated in a Senſe of Nature, may admit of another Senſe, leſs capable of exaſperating them, *viz.* A figurative Senſe, a Senſe of Conſecration? Becauſe Chriſt's Hour was not yet come, as *Trinitarians* ſpeak, or that it was not time to reveal that great Myſtery, was it better to overthrow a good Senſe, and the right Impreſſion cauſed by the firſt Words, than to be ſtoned? As if Chriſt had no other means of eſcaping from the Jews, than to prevaricate by diſowning a Capital Truth, which he had advanced, and had been rightly underſtood. He who came to lay down his Life to bear witneſs to the Truth, ſhall he act againſt his Father's Intent, and the Duties of his Deſignation, by preſerving his Life at the coſt of Truth?

I know that our Bleſſed Saviour delivers his Doctrine in profound Wiſdom, having regard to the Circumſtances of Place, Time and Perſons. However there is a vaſt difference between the delivering of a Doctrine in a prudent and wiſe Manner, and the diſowning of a Truth, when it has been once delivered; or (which comes to the ſame) the taking away of a true and genuine Impreſſion, made by ſome words ſuitable to the Intent of him that ſpeaks, to put into its room a new Senſe, which neither the Hearer nor the Teacher had at firſt thought of. In a word, the Doctor cannot alledge this Reaſon taken from a prudent Diſpenſation, ſeeing among his Proofs he brings in the 38 Verſe, which follows this: wherein Chriſt, as he thinks, comes again to the Senſe of Nature. But how can this be, if he had before prudently deſiſted from it, being contented with the Senſe of Sanctification, as more ſuitable to their Needs? The Orthodox (as they call themſelves) can no ways eſcape, if Chriſt made uſe of this latter Reaſon, taken from his Sanctification, to avoid the Fury of the Jews: He hath at the ſame time given away the former, taken from the Eternal Generation, which had ſo much exaſperated them againſt him; or elſe it had been to no purpoſe, if teaching the latter, which did appeaſe them, he had been willing they ſhould have believed the former, which did exaſperate them. No, no, but it is as if he had ſaid, *Why do ye ſtone me?* I did not mean that I was the Son of God by Nature, as you do fancy, but only by Sanctification and by Unction, which is no way contrary to your Law, nor Blaſphemy, as the former would be. Is it not as if he had ſaid, that he was the *Son of God* only in ſuch a ſenſe as is not Blaſphemy according to their Law? that is, that he is ſuch only in a Senſe exclu-

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ſive to all other that ſhould make him liable to ſtoning?

I ſhould think this Paſſage written with the very Finger of Truth, to be unanſwerable, were it not that I know the Orthodox are wont to darken the moſt bright Light, at the coſt of Sincerity and good Senſe, and make no Scruple of the groſſeſt Contradictions and Abſurdities, ſo they may but caſt Duſt in the Eyes of ſimple Men.

Now any one may ſee that I might argue againſt the Second Proof made uſe of by the Author, as I have done againſt the Firſt: the Paſſage I am explaining affording me the ſame Reaſons againſt either of them, ſeeing it ſtands between them, and caſts its Light both upon the foregoing and the following Verſes. But the Intelligent Reader may do it himſelf, with the help of theſe Obſervations. *Calvin's* ſolid and penetrating Wit did ſo well perceive the ſtrength of theſe Reflections, that he aſſerts (*See his Comment upon the Place.*) that the Fathers had erroneouſly made uſe of thoſe words againſt the *Arians*, *I and the Father are one*; ſo far was he from ſpying therein any Unity of Eſſence. I have proved that the Doctor does alſo uſe them courſely, and conſequently the other Paſſages, which he alledges for the confirmation of this, *viz.* That *the Word was with God*; *that it was in the Boſom of the Father*, *&c.* ought to be explained with reſpect to this expreſs Declaration of the Saviour of the World himſelf. So that if he ſaid he was the *Son of God*, it is, becauſe the Father had ſanctified and ſent him into the World, as other Perſons are likewiſe called Gods, to whom the Divine Word or Commiſſion has come, but in a far different Proportion. Therefore I would have the Author to know, that ſince this Paſſage contains in a moſt clear and exact way, the true Foundation upon which is grounded the Title of *Son of God*, which Chriſt aſcribes to himſelf; I may lawfully make uſe of it to explain any other Paſſage, wherein Chriſt is ſtiled *God*, or *Son of God*, unleſs he can prove that ſuch a Senſe cannot be applied to them, without a Contradiction, or bring another Reaſon, upon which the Title of *Son of God* is alſo expreſly grounded; as for example, the Eternal Generation. But all the Paſſages of the Goſpel which contain a Reaſon, why Chriſt is called the *Son of God*, and wherein the very term of Generation is made uſe of, are of the ſame Nature with this, containing only Reaſons of the ſame kind; for they are all taken from the Oeconomy and Miniſtry of Chriſt: Some from his Conception by the Holy Ghoſt; the other from his Reſurrection and Exaltation, but none at all from his Eternal Generation.

The Title of *Son of God* is in Scripture grounded upon theſe Five Things: Two that are taken from his Twofold Birth, the One out of the *Womb of the Virgin*, by the operation of the Holy Ghoſt, *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the Power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee*: Therefore alſo *that Holy Thing which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the* Son of God. *Luke* 1. 35. The other out of the *Womb of the Earth*, by virtue of his Reſurrection, *And we declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promiſe which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the ſame, in that he hath raiſed up Jeſus again*; *as it is alſo written in the ſecond* Pſalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Acts 13. 32, 33. Theſe two Things make him undoubtedly the Natural *Son of God*, his *only begotten Son*, his *proper* or *own Son*: He alone being born of a Virgin by the Holy Ghoſt: He alone being the Firſt-born from the Dead. Thus the Title of Son of God is beſtowed upon him after an incommunicable way. The Three other Grounds of Chriſt's Sonſhip, are drawn from his Offices. The Firſt; Becauſe he is that Prophet, *whom the Father hath ſanctified and ſent into the World*, with an extraordinary Commiſſion, and an Unction without Meaſure; for the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon him, and there came a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son*, &c. *Mat.* 3. laſt. The Second; Becauſe he is the Great High-Prieſt, immediately called to that Office by God himſelf, who ſaid unto him, *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee*,

that, Heb. 5. 5. And the Third, Because he is the King, whom God hath exalted to a Supream Power, both in Heaven and Earth, directing to him the same Speech, *Thou art my Son*, &c. Heb. 1. 5. which makes him the Son of God by way of Excellence, or Pre-eminence above all the other Prophets, Priests and Kings. The Scripture does expressly afford us all these Grounds of Christ's Divinity, and in the very Places, wherein the Holy Ghost intends to explain himself, and to let us know, why *God* dignifies *Christ* with the Name and Title of his Son. They are not meer Words, but Expositions and Comments upon the other places, the sense of which is not so clear and obvious. They are such Reasons as fill up the Idea of the Terms, where Christ is called the *only begotten Son of God*, his *beloved Son*, and his *own Son*. If there be any other which ascribe to him the same Honour in a Sense of an Eternal Generation, and say, that he is such, because the Father has begotten him from all Eternity of his own Substance, let them produce them, and shew; 1. That such a Generation is therein expresly contained. 2. That it is the Basis of that glorious Title of *God*, or *Son of God*, bestowed upon Christ. Till therefore the Doctor brings new Reason of another kind, taken from the Eternal Generation, upon which, as upon a solid Foundation, the Title of Son of God is clearly grounded, and with as much evidence, as it is upon the places above mentioned; till then, I say, I may lawfully determine the Sense of those naked and simple Expressions controverted amongst us, by the sense of those Passages, wherein our Question is determined. What indeed is this Conception, this Sanctification, this Resurrection, this heavenly Instalment and Exaltation, which made him to be the Son of God? Is all this an Eternal Generation? Shall we understand by *to Day*, Eternity, and not this very time, this Day, of his second Birth and of his Coronation?

Let us endeavour to make this Author sensible of this Difficulty, which perhaps he has perceived already. The Question now controverted amongst us, viz. in what Sense Christ is God, was formerly agitated in his Presence. The Jews his Adversaries asserted, as our Orthodox do, that he had made himself God by Nature, and the Doctor assures us that they mistook not Christ's meaning. However it does plainly appear that Christ refutes this Accusation; that he clears himself of the Blasphemy, wherewith the Jews and the Doctor charge him, and plainly asserts that he told them he was the Son of God in a like Sense only as others sent by God are, whom the Scripture dignifies with the Title of Gods. Here is the Controversy determined in behalf of the Doctor's Adversaries. Here consequently the Jews are convinced of being Calumniators, and the Doctor of being mistaken as well as they. Indeed Christ shuns to stile himself God, tho it follows from his Reasoning that he has right to such a Title. He is contented to stile himself the Son of God. And hereupon, I think, is grounded *Lactantius*'s Observation, wherein, speaking of Christ, he says, (lib. 4. c. 14.) *Nunquam seipse Deum dixit, quia non servasset fidem, si missus ut Deos tolleret, & unum asseveret, inducret alium præter unum.* 'He never stiled himself God, because 'he should not have perform'd his Trust, if 'being sent to take away Gods, and to assert 'that there is but one, he should have introduced another besides one. When the Jews, offended at the Doctrine of Christ, objected against him, *How can this Man give us his Flesh to eat?* Supposing that Christ had returned them this Answer, *How? by offering it to your Faith:* then the Dispute would be decided in the behalf of the Reformed Churches. Thus it stands here. The Jews, scandalized, break out into this Objection, *How? Thou being a Man, makest thy self God?* Christ answers, *How? Because the Father has sanctified me, as the other Gods mentioned in your Law.* The Question therefore is decided in the behalf of the *Unitarians*.

But this is not all, the *Unitarians*, or *Socinians*, do not only rely upon clear Passages, wherein their Conclusions are plainly contained,

tained, but upon the Analogy of Faith, I mean the Primitive Facts and Doctrines set down in the Creed of the Apostles, which ought to fix by their own Evidence the Sense of those remote Doctrines, where Truth is not so obvious, nor so often repeated. Those Primitive Facts shew forth that unalterable Faith, which is liable neither to Dispute nor Change, and is stiled by *Tertullian*, *Regula Fidei immobilis & irreformabilis*; an unmoveable and unalterable Rule of Faith: and by *Vincentius Lirinensis*, *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*; That which has been believed in all times, every where, and by all Men. Take away those unvariable Objects, there remains nothing but Uncertainty and Confusion: Moral Things being capable of receiving infinite different Interpretations, and both Human and Divine Speech being susceptible of a thousand possible and probable Senses, unless Reason and the Primitive Objects of Revelation restrain them to a fixt Sense, whereby our Idea's may be determined to some undeniable matter, that no rational Dispute can overthrow. Those Primitive Facts are the Birth, the Life, the Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, whereby we are taught that Christ was a Man like unto us in all things, Sin only excepted, which Facts are an unmoveable Foundation, according to which we ought to examin the other parts of the Revelation, not by Metaphysical Distinctions of Essence, Persons and Natures, which the Holy Ghost never thought of, but by reasons of Dispensation and Oeconomy, which teach us that he, who was a Man like unto us, has had, through his Obedience, the Supream Dignity of Son of God conferr'd upon him, God having made him Lord and Christ; yea, *Deus illum fecit Deum*, says St. *Ambrose de fid. ad Gratian.* not as the Author is pleased to say, that God has only declared thereby that he was his Son by an Eternal Generation. The Scripture can admit of no such Sense, when it says, (*See the Greek and English Margin*) that Christ *was determined the Son of God in Power, by the Resurrection from the Dead.* And more expressly yet, when it does affirm, that upon the account of his Sufferings, *God has highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every Name.* The Sense, which the Author puts upon it, would deprive Christ of all the Glory of his Vertue and his Obedience: whereas the Sense of the Scripture consists in ascribing to his Sufferings the Ground and Foundation of his Exaltation.

Now after so particulariz'd a History of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the *Messias*; after so constant and well known Facts: Who would think that some Expressions by the by, should have made us mistake him, who is the Subject of this History, for the Supream God? We have in this imitated the Jews, who finding it a hard task to reconcile the Sufferings of the *Messias* with the Glory ascribed to him by the Prophets, have contrived two *Messiasses*, one the Son of *David*, a glorious Conqueror; the other the Son of *Joseph*, afflicted and miserable. Thus we being not willing to reconcile Christ's Humiliation with his glorious Exaltation, had rather fancy two Natures, or rather two Persons in Christ, than to admit of a Sense delivered by the sacred Scripture it self, which calls them Gods, whom God exalts to a Supream Dignity; especially when such an Exaltation is immediately confer'd. We chuse rather to renounce common Sense and Reason, and to fly to incomprehensible Mataphysicks, than to interpret Expressions relating to Dispensation according to Primitive Truths, and Historical Terms; which are the Main of the Gospel, and ought to fix the Sense of all the rest.

Shall my Faith depend upon *Plato*'s Ideas, *Aristotle*'s Subtilties, *Cartesius* his self and mutual Conciousness, and Metaphysical Abstractions, more unintelligible to poor Mortal Men than the Tongue of Angels? Alas! If the School-Men who teach me to say in my familiar Catechism, that there are Three Persons in one Numerical Essence, had been pleased to teach me on the contrary, that there are Three Essences in one Numerical Person, I could have liked this latter as well

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as the former, and should cry *Mystery*, and devoutly admire what I could not understand. Again, Shall my Faith be the Whirlwind of all the Niceties of Grammar, and over-rash Criticism, that has nothing of certainty in it self? No, no, my Faith has no other Foundation, but those unvariable Truths, which are inspired by the Holy Ghost, and offer themselves to the Eyes of any that can but read, without reasoning, and Criticism, and in all sorts of Versions; no other Foundation but those undeniable Facts, which the Sacred Writers have seen and heard, and are not tyed to the Method used by those that relate them. The Holy Ghost has affected neither Hebraism nor Grecism, neither improper nor figurative Speech, but the Expressions have depended upon the choice of the Writers, and internal Circumstances, the Native Countrey, Genius, Education, Studies, *&c.* of the Pen-Men; or External, as Time, Places, Persons, with whom they discourse, *&c.* All these are liable to Variations, but the main Thing and the Body of the Essential Doctrines, is liable to no such Variety. The Word of God does not consist in meer Words, the Things chiefly are inspired, not so much the Terms, wherein Men do, to no purpose, seek for Mysteries. The Apostles have oftentimes cited but the Sense of the Old Testament-Scriptures, without any scruple for the Words. The Fathers did so too, when they cited the New-Testament. That Science of Words is a meer Jewish Superstition, followed by the *Valentinians* and such other *Gnosticks*. Hence it was they found so many Secrets, which the latter Christians did canonize as Capital Doctrines. I do not question, but the most part of the various Readings that are in our Bibles, rise from the Ancient Copies, their not having that Spirit of Cabal. They did not trouble themselves about the nice Distinction between these Words, *Christ*, *Lord*, *God*; which they often confounded, and which are now adays the occasion of so many Disputes; because they took them for Synonimous, not foreseeing that time should come, when Men would build great Mysteries upon a Word, to the great prejudice of the Genius of the Gospel, and the Primitive Objects spread throughout it, which ought to fix a Sense to all the rest. They are charged with Malice, or Negligence. That may be. But it's probable enough, they did not also affect Distinctions in Words which they thought indifferent. Had the Evangelical Knowledge its stress in the Words, Translations should become meerly insignificant and useless, because they would overthrow the whole Mystery. That is so true, that those who have contrived certain Words to express their Mysteries, do always keep them in their Original Majesty, being most of them Greek or Latin, and most barbarous in our vulgar Tongues, as *Consubstantial*, *Hypostatical*, &c. Yea the very same Words were look'd upon as Strangers in their Native Countrey; for the Ancient Greeks did hardly agree about the Signification of the Word *Hypostasis*, which makes it the more recommendable to our Orthodox. The ambiguous Signification of this Word making it very fit for the Mystery, that is, to express a thing utterly inexplicable, and incomprehensible. They distrust Scripture-Expressions, which the Hereticks will obstinately retain: *Hereticks*, says a Modern Author, *have much more Reason to mistrust the Humane and Cabalistick Terms, which the Orthodox bring in with such a Tyranny.* St. *Jerome* mistrusted them in a Letter to Pope *Damasus*, *Non sufficit sensus*, says he, *ipsum nomen efflagitant, quia nescio quid veneni in Syllabis latet*, — And *quia vocabula non edidicimus, Hæretici judicamur.* 'The Sense is not sufficient, they exact of us the very Words, '(*they force them upon us*) because I know 'not what Venome lies hid under cover 'of the Syllables; — And because we do 'not learn Words, we are accounted He'reticks. But the Confession of St. *Austin* seems to me the most ingenuous that can be, (*De Trin. l. 5. c. 9.*) *Cum quæritur quid Tres? Magna prorsus inopia humanum laborat eloquium,*

eloquium, dictum est tamen Tres Personæ, non ut illud dicerentur, sed ne tacerentur. ' When Men ' ask, says he, what is meant by Three? ' all humane Speech comes too short of it; ' yet we have ventured to say Three Per- ' sons, not that we should say that, but ' that we may not be silent. He is surely in the right, it were too shameful a Silence. Stout-hearted Divines must never hold their peace, let them rather utter extravagant Words; they pay nothing for them, and yet they'l serve turn for the People. Hence it is that the Ancients, who were wiser than we, made up their Creed either only of undeniable Facts of God the Creator, and of the *Messiae*, born, dead, risen, *&c.* or of Primitive and unalterable Doctrines of Remission of Sins, of the Resurrection of the Body, *&c.* Compare with this Christian Simplicity, our Confessions of Faith encreased to an infinite Bulk, and the Philosophical and Cabalistical Creed of *Athanasius*, which may serve the turn of a full Dictionary for Theological Gibberish. Read the Creed of the Apostles; every thing therein is agreeable to the Gospel, and breaths the Simplicity which is in Christ. Read the Creed of the pretended *Athanasius*. ' The ' Catholick Faith (says he) is this, That we ' worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity ' in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, ' nor dividing the Substance. And so he goes on in the same tune, in a train of Burdens, which indeed might be look'd upon as a Song, with greater reason than that of the Nicene Creed, *God of God, Light of Light*, which *Calvin* calls *Cantilenam, a little Song.* Good God! Is it possible, that so strange a Composition should be look'd upon as the Foundation of Christianity?

But such Terms, say they, are made use of to fix the sense of Scripture, and to distinguish Hereticks. Very well. But with such Arms a Papist will be able to defend the most monstrous Opinions. Do but distinguish Two Natures in the Person of Christ, he will also distinguish Two Manners of being in Christ's Body: a Sacramental Being, and a Natural Being; and with such a Distinction, as with an impenetrable Shield, he will repel all the Darts shot against him. It is an easy thing to defend an absurd Opinion, with a more absurd Distinction. What will not Error do, when it gets such a licence? Certainly as Metaphysicks are but rash Reasonings, which go beyond the Limits prescribed by God to the Objects of Reason: So the Confessions of Faith, which are puffed up with Metaphysical Terms, are nothing else but a Debauch'd Faith, which launches beyond the just Limits, which God has set to its Objects. All the Mysteries which are spoken of in so splendid a way, are of this Nature. They are the Wandrings of an unruly and over curious Fancy, which launches out from the Foundation of Religion, contained in the Primitive Objects of the Gospel, to search in every Word of the Revelation, such Secrets as God never put there; finding every-where cunning Mysteries, as if Religion did consist in Cabals and Subtilties. You'l say, it is an incomprehensible Mystery to our Finite Minds. You say so indeed; so will a Papist say of his pretended Mystery, and they will both of them have me to submit my Faith and my Reason. But it's ridiculous to require of me that I should submit such things as I am sure of, to a Revelation which is controverted. Do but yield the *Self* and *Mutual Consciousness* of the Doctor to a Papist, and the shift of Mysteries, it will be no hard matter for him to prove that a Million of Bodies are but one Body. With the help of such a Method, a Pagan will easily clear himself of the charge of *Polytheism*. *Jupiter, Pluto*, and *Neptune* will be Three by Self-Consciousness, and will be but One by Mutual Consciousness. *Minerva, Venus*, &c. will be nothing else but the Vertues of that Supream and Infinite God. The one will be his Wisdom, the other his Love, *&c.* by this Maxime of the Author, that, *What are Faculties in us, are Persons in God*, pag. 189. So that what he said about Socinianism, pag. 252. will be found more suitable to his Orthodoxy, that,

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is justifie Falsehood, and extols both Pagan and Papish Idolatries.

The *Socinians* are accused of Subtilty: this appears to me very strange. The high and unintelligible Notions of the Orthodox are accounted sacred Mysteries; but *Socinians* do no sooner reduce all things to common Sense and the Primitive Doctrines of the Gospel, but it's look'd upon as Subtilty, violent and unnatural Explications. To insist upon the Creed of the Apostles, wherein are contained the first Facts, and such Facts as are not above the reach of any Man, is accounted Subtilty. What will then become of those refined Metaphysicks, Essence, Nature, Persons, Modes, Consubstantialities, Hypostases, Self and Mutual-Consciousness; and of that Learning consisting in meer Words, whereof the Vulgar has no Idea, and which the Doctors themselves utter without understanding them? *His Quæstiunculis*, (says *Erasmus* in his Notes upon the First Chapter of the first Epistle to *Timothy*) *ætas verum omnium fugacissima conteritur, cum plerique sint ejus generis ut doctius nesciantur quam sciantur, at ridiculè quærantur, temerè definiantur. Breve tempus est, & arduum est negotium agere verè Christianum.* ——*Os consecratum est Evangelio, & nihil crepat nisi Averroem & Aristotelem* (add to it, *& Cartesium.*)——*Neque minus peccant qui nobis objiciunt nimios Cabalisticos & Talmudicos.* 'In 'these little Questions our Age, of all things 'the most fleeting, is consumed, when as 'most of them are of that kind, that it's 'more learning to be ignorant of them than 'to know them; that they are ridiculously 'enquired into, and rashly defined. The 'Time is short, and it's a difficult matter to 'be truly Christian.——Our Mouth is conse-'crated to the Gospel, and we crake nothing 'but *Averroes* and *Aristotle* (*I may add also Cartesius*) ——Neither are they less faulty, 'who present us with Cabalistick and Tal-'mudick Smoak. *Grotius* in his 6th Book *De Veritate Relig. Christ.* speaking of *Constantius*'s Age, and those that followed after, says, *Sicut olim Arbori vitæ prælata Arbor scientiæ maximæ detexat mala, ita tunc quoque curiosa Eruditio, sinistri exitiosique effectus Religionis Ars facta.* 'As of old 'the Tree of Knowledg, preferr'd before the 'Tree of Life, brought upon us the greatest 'Evils: so then also curious Learning 'esteem'd more than Piety, and Religion 'being made an Art, *did the same.* For the 'Consequence of that was, that after the 'Example of those, that built the Tower of *Babel*, a rash affectation of Sublime Things 'brought forth differing Speeches and Dis-'cord; which the common People beholding, and not knowing which way to turn 'themselves, laid the fault upon the Holy 'Scriptures, and began to avoid them as 'pernicious; and Religion every where be-'gan to be placed not in the Purity of the 'Mind, but ——in flaming Zeal for the Parties 'they had once chosen; so at length it came 'to pass there were many Christians in name, 'but in reality very few. In effect, by the means of Mystery, Divines have made Religion a very difficult thing, that is, an Art, which Christians are not able to understand, (*Ex Religione Ars facta*, says *Grotius.*) Thereby they raised themselves above common Christians, and are made necessary to the People, improving that Art to their own Benefit. If Religion were easy and without any incumbrance, every one should be Doctor to himself. Christianity is by that means nothing else but the Religion of Learned Men, and of the most subtile and refined Philosophers. Those are esteem'd the most excellent Christians, who believe most Mysteries. Men will by no means have a Religion of a Level, which neither ascends into Heaven, nor descends into the Deep, and whose whole Mystery is nigh us, in the Faith of the Heart

and in the Confeſſion of the Mouth: *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart that God has raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved*, Rom. 10. 9.

I know very well why they fancy the *Socinians* to be ſubtile Men it is: becauſe they oppoſe that vain Learning, which has been introduced into the moſt popular Catechiſms, and unto which moſt Men are inured. They oppoſe Prejudices, a corrupt and dark Tradition, an inveterate Cuſtom of judging of all things by Human Authority, which are the only Principles whereby we underſtand Scripture, ſince the time the God of this World has blinded our Underſtandings with the Smoak of a Caballiſtical Talmud, a crude Scholaſtick Divinity, and an arrogant and uncertain Criticiſm. The Dirty Spring which has afforded this falſe Learning is the *Gnoſticiſm*, which boaſted of great Myſteries, but of no Holy Practices. They were the firſt Hereticks, who made Perfection to conſiſt in High Knowledg, and have heaped up Trinity upon Trinity; (*Vid. Concil. Bracar.* 1. *Art.* 2.) Men, it ſeems, are afraid of the low Eſtate and Sufferings of Chriſt, and think to ſhun theſe Reproaches made unto us by the Jews, by making him the Supream God. Thus they deſtroy his Unction, they take away from him his real Title of Chriſt, to beſtow upon him an imaginary One. He has been made God by the Hand of the Father, who crowned his Vertue and his Obedience with that excellent and glorious Name: and they will have him to be imaginarily ſuch by the Hands of Men, by a Title, which is not the Reward of his Sufferings. If it has been lawful for the *Homoouſians* to fancy a Chriſt or a Son of God, who did exiſt before him who was born of the Virgin *Mary*, without thinking of contradicting the Articles of the Creed, *I believe in Jeſus Chriſt the only begotten Son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin* Mary, &c. *and ſits after his Sufferings at the right Hand of God*: which is the moſt excellent way, whereby a Man may be called the Son of God. Why ſhan't the *Papiſts* be allowed to contrive a Chriſt 1600 years after him that was born of a Virgin, who is born of a Morſel of Bread, conceived and formed by the words of a Prieſt, without any deſign of contradicting the ſame Article? Indeed it is an eaſier thing to make a Chriſt of a Morſel of Bread, than the Supream God of a Man. If the one diſtinguiſhes the Natures, the other will diſtinguiſh the Manner of exiſting: both of them will make uſe of Metaphyſicks, and by the help of ſuch Theological Inſtruments, each one will free himſelf from Difficulties, and it ſhall not be known which of them gets the better. In effect, each one will avoid the moſt preſſing Arguments, by contriving a Diſtinction more abſurd than the very Opinion which he maintains, one Abſurdity helping another; or by finding out a new Senſe of the Authority brought againſt him; for every Divine can eaſily ſhew, that the places objected againſt him, are capable of a Senſe, which is not contrary to him. One may eaſily ſee how convenient the Machin of probable Senſes is, which our Divines bring into their Diſputes: what an eaſy thing it is for them to free themſelves from preſſing Difficulties, and make new Overtures with thoſe famous Keys, 'of Tranſpoſition of Words or Clauſes, 'Errors of Copies, various Readings, various 'Meanings of the ſame Word, Punctuation, 'taking away or adding of the Negative Par-'ticle, Alluſion to Cuſtoms, Conſiderations 'of the Matter in Hand, Exaggeration, Inter-'rogation, Parentheſis, Literal Senſe, Figu-'rative Senſe, want of Exactneſs in the Sacred 'Writers, Prudence in concealing ſome things 'or in complying with ſome Opinions pre-'vailing in their Times, condeſcention to 'Pagans or Jews, uſing ſuch Ideas as prevail-'ed in ſuch a Religion, Prejudication in the 'Hearers, Anſwers ſuitable to their Needs 'rather than to their Queries, Compendious 'Expreſſions, Phraſeology of that Time, the 'Author's Nation and Native Countrey, Pa-'rallel Paſſages, Precepts peculiar to the A-'poſtles, Advices to Perfection, Cenſures a-'gainſt certain Hereticks, the Circumſtances 'of the Subject, the Scope of the Author, 'what goes before and what follows, the Bar-'renneſs

' renneſs of the *Hebrew* Tongue, and conſe-
' quently its Ambiguity, its particular Idioms,
' the various Senſes of the ſame Verb in dif-
' ferent Conjugations, the want of certain
' ways of Expreſſion uſed in other Tongues,
' the Sublime and Metaphorical Expreſſions
' moſt frequent in the Oriental Languages,
' the Imitation of the Hebrew Idiom in the
' Lxx Verſion, and in the Original Text of the
' New Teſtament, Greek of the Synagogue,
' and ſuch like Keys of Solution very fit to
' eternize Diſputes. I do not deny but ſuch Means may be fit to find out the Truth, but it's only when controverted Truths are thereby brought to the Primitive and Undeniable Truths: that is to ſay, when care is taken that every thing be referred to the Analogy of Faith, to the Rule of Faith contained in the Creed of the Univerſal Church: then it is very proper to make uſe of them. Whereas it is a Source of Error, to uſe them in relation to a Syſtem, and to the particular Opinion of the Party wherein one finds himſelf engaged, which every one calls the Analogy of Faith; yet it is nothing but that particular Tradition, which we will not allow in the Church of *Rome*. So that the *Socinians* only, who refer every thing to the Primitive Truths, and to Undeniable Facts, may make uſe of thoſe Keys of Solution. Becauſe having Light on this firſt Foundation whereon to fix their Foot, they muſt needs make a good uſe of their Criticiſm; having, I ſay, this Primitive Truth on their ſide, that there is but One God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and at the ſame time a Circumſtantiated Hiſtory of the Birth, Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt, which, as all do confeſs, is an undeniable Proof that he was a Man.

Theſe two Principles being once acknowledged by Rational Men, who have a diſtinct Idea of the Nature of theſe two Beings, God and Man, they muſt of neceſſity fix upon this Ground the Senſe of all other Truths, which ſeem to contradict this avowed Truth, and expound them in a Senſe of Morality and of Diſpenſation, not in an Abſtract and Metaphyſical Senſe of Nature, Perſon, Eſſence, Hypoſtaſis, Generation, Proceſſion, Relation, Numerical and Specifical Unity, and ſuch like, which every one admires, crying Myſtery! Myſtery! but no Man underſtands. This is a Priviledge, which we make uſe of againſt the *Papiſts*. Whilſt they bring in the Letter, *This is my Body*; *My Fleſh is Meat indeed*, &c. they run themſelves to no purpoſe into long Criticiſms about the Words *Body* and *Fleſh*. They wander notwithſtanding their long Reaſonings, and make an ill uſe of thoſe Means fit to find out a true Interpretation; becauſe we ſhew that there is againſt them this undeniable Fact, that Chriſt took Bread, gave Bread; and this Primitive and Unmoveable Truth, that Chriſt aſcended into Heaven. Thus it ſtands with the Doctor and the Socinians: They will ſhew him that he can make no uſe either of the Letter of Scripture, or the Means of Solution allowed in a lawful Diſpute, without wandering moſt pitifully; becauſe there ſtands in his way this Primitive Truth, that *there is but One God*, and this Fact acknowledged by all, that *Chriſt was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, and born of the Virgin* Mary. He can by no means make uſe of ſuch Methods, if he departs never ſo little from thoſe firſt Foundations of the Chriſtian Religion: but in referring every thing thereunto, he may. Otherwiſe he muſt fly to Metaphyſicks; but after all Pretences, the Metaphyſical Senſe is unknown to Scripture. All the Knowledge, which the Scripture affords us concerning God, is meerly Moral and Relative to us, but no ways Metaphyſical; for in that reſpect God being incomprehenſible, he cannot be revealed. So that whatever we know concerning the Divine Perfections, is Moral, and has a Relation to us, *viz.* that his Power has created us; that his Goodneſs is communicated to us, as unto his Creatures; that his Juſtice inflicts Puniſhment upon the Guilty, and Protects the Innocent; that his Mercy forgives them that Repent, eſpecially through Chriſt under the Goſpel; that the ſame Power that gives us Life and preſerves it, will be able to reſtore

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it again, when we have lost it in his Service; that his Wisdom knows how to conduct all sorts of Means, in order to the Salvation of those that love him, &c.

For example, I have a clear and distinct Idea, that nothing can escape his Hands, that nothing can steal out of his Sight. This Idea is sufficient to settle my Faith in respect to his Omniscience, and his Omnipresence. But to know whether there is an Immensity of Essence or of Operation, these are Metaphysicks out of my reach, and are no Helps to the settling of my Confidence and Trust in him. Therefore it is that Revelation does not speak precisely about this. Thus it is with the Unity of God. I have but a Moral, Natural or Popular Idea of this Unity, as much as One is opposite to Many; and thereby I understand an Idea, which is the same among all Men, to whom the Commandment of worshipping One God has been delivered: The Lawgiver having given no Laws that ought to be taken in a Metaphysical Sense, which depends upon a heated Imagination, and varies according to the Humours, the Condition, the Climate, the Sect of Philosophy, and the Prejudications of Men. According to the Stile of Laws, which is commonly simple and easy, by *God* we understand a Divine and Supream Person, one Numerical Being and Spirit, having the same Notion of that Unity, which we have of an Angel, a Man, a King, &c. The *Jews* being used to the Notion of the word *God*; if Christ and his Apostles had changed it, without warning them of it, by taking this word in a Sense unknown to the Jewish Nation, understanding in a Metaphysical way by God, *Three Beings*, and *Three Minds*, as the Doctor does: They should have imposed upon them by such an Equivocation, which all of a sudden changes the Natural Idea, which the Law afforded them of the Unity of God, unto a Metaphysical Idea, whereby *Aristotle* himself might have been deceived: that Change being of such a Nature, that there is no Law, tho never so plain and positive, but its Force and Authority might be thereby eluded.

But, say they, the Scripture speaks of Christ as if he were the Supream God, ascribing to him his Names, his Works, and his Perfections. I answer, that God in his Revelations supposes that we have some common Notions, which are derived either from Nature, or from a general Tradition, whereby we come to a distinct Idea of God, and of his Creatures, as much as we are concerned therein in order to our Civil or Religious Life. We know in that respect, what is a Spirit, a Body, One, and Many. This being supposed, the Scripture sometimes runs it self into figurative Expressions, which it would undoubtedly avoid, were it not that it supposes us to have sufficient Knowledge to rectify them, and bring them to a Rational Sense, suitable to the Nature of the things in question. So that we cannot stumble at the Letter of those Expressions, but by making an ill use of our Senses, Reason and Conscience. Therefore God will have us to be attentive to his Word, and to examine it with a sincere Heart, and a discerning Mind, and free from Prejudices. As for instance, Scripture says that Christians are *Partakers of the Divine Nature*; had it said so much of Christ, *viz.* That the Father had communicated to, or *made him Partaker of his Divine Nature*, what matter of Triumph should not this be for the Trinitarians? What could they say more positive for Consubstantiality, and for the Foundation of the Distinction, Nature and Persons? Yet, suppose it had done so, I take it as matter of fact, that the Evangelical History would afford us as many good Reasons to rectify that Expression in relation to our Saviour, as our Senses and Reason do afford us to bring it to a fit and reasonable Sense, in relation to Christians Partakers of the Divine Promise. Thus the Scripture does not stick to attribute unto God, Hands, Eyes, Bowels, and a Thousand such Things, as would induce us to believe that he is Corporeal, did we not know either by the Idea which we have of the most perfect Being, or by some other plain and simple Expressions of

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Revelation, that God is a Spirit. For of two Expreſſions of Scripture, we are obliged to take in a literal Senſe, that which ſuits beſt our Natural Knowledge; and to look upon as Figurative, that which is contrary to thoſe Notions, being underſtood in a literal Senſe. Thus the Scripture calls the Euchariſtical Bread *the Body of Chriſt*, Magiſtrates, Angels, and the Meſſias *God*; becauſe it ſuppoſes that we may eaſily put a good Senſe upon theſe Denominations. Firſt, by ſome clear Paſſages of the Revelation, which teach us that Chriſt's Body is in Heaven; that God is One; that the *Meſſias* is a Man like unto us, whom, upon the account of his Obedience, God has raiſed to a Divine Authority: ſo giving us the Reaſon and Ground of that Denomination, which is taken, not from his Nature, but from his Obedience and his Offices. Secondly, By the Knowledge, with which he endowed us at our Creation, to make us capable of knowing and worſhipping Him, whereby we judge diſtinctly what is Bread, a humane Body, a God, a Man, *&c.* For this Natural Revelation continues ſtill, and is the Foundation of all other. When God ſaid to the *Iſraelites*, *The Lord thy God is One Lord, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*, if thereby God meant One in Eſſence, and Three in Perſons, his Laws ſhould be more obſcure than the Oracles of the Falſe Gods. The Stile of the Laws (as I ſaid before) is Simple, Natural, and Popular, and they call One God, *One*, in the ſame ſenſe as we commonly ſay, an Angel, a Man; for there is a certain Language common to all Mankind, and certain Notions known to all Nations, which are like a Foundation to the Expreſſions of the Goſpel, of the Law, and of all ſorts of Revelation. What is then to be done with Men, who are ſo fooliſh as to make of all Abſurdities ſo many Myſteries? of a Man a Supream God? of a bit of Bread Chriſt? being not willing to make uſe of their Senſes, Reaſon, and Primitive Faith, *I believe in God*, &c. Such Men are incurable; for God has afforded no Remedy for their Cure. *Pervicacie nullum remedium poſuit Deus*; God has appointed no Remedy for wilful Obſtinacy.

It ought to be confeſſ, Sir, that it would be a very eaſy thing to find out in Scripture the whole Will of God, as much as we are concerned therein, would we but read it with Humility and Reſpect, helped with our common Knowledge, free from Prejudices, and laying aſide that Learning falſly ſo called. Would we, I ſay, read it as we read the Proclamations of our Kings; regarding only their Will, without philoſophizing or criticizing upon the Words contained in them; being perſwaded that God ſpake as we commonly ſpeak; and that whatever Hebraiſm or Greciſm there is in his Word; yet he has caſt over it a certain Univerſal Intelligence, common to all Nations that are endowed with Speech, and grounded upon the common Notices of our Senſes and Reaſon; which is preſently perceived by any Rational and Unprejudiced Man, tho he have no skill either in Greek or in Latin. Take away Prejudices, and give way to common Senſe and Reaſon, which God does always ſuppoſe in all his Revelations; and then what can be for inſtance more eaſily refuted, than the Monſtrous Opinion of Tranſubſtantiation, which makes up the Capital Belief of the Church of *Rome*? When I give way to my Senſes in an ordinary courſe, without preventing them by the falſe Conceptions of my Mind: if any Body tell me by ſhewing the King's Picture, *Here's the King*, my Eyes ſee it is the King's Picture which they ſhew me; my Ears are determined by my Eyes to the true meaning of thoſe Words. So that *here's the King* will never produce in my Mind the Idea of the very Perſon of the King originally and really preſent. Thus in a Senſe of Religion and of Morality, when I hear Chriſt ſay, *This is my Body*, ſhewing me the Sacrament and Memorial of his Body, and at the very ſame time that my Ears hear theſe Words, *This is my Body*, my Eyes ſee it is the Image of Chriſt's Body, which he offers me in a Holy and Conſecrated Bread, to celebrate the Memory of his Death; and my Eyes teſtify to me

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that this Bread remains Bread ſtill, even after the Divine Conſecration: then undoubtedly my Ears determined by my Eyes to the true Senſe of the Words, *This is my Body*, will in no wiſe produce in my Mind the Idea of a Corporeal and Natural Body of Chriſt. But they will ſay, Faith ought to produce it, ſeeing Chriſt ſaid ſo. I anſwer; I can have no Faith, but it muſt be grounded either upon my Senſes, or the ſight of a Miracle, or the hearing of the Word of God. Now there is no Miracle here, ſeeing my Eyes diſcover to me no miraculous Change of the Bread into the Body of Chriſt. On the contrary, they ſee Bread ſtill: but a Miracle conſiſts in ſhewing me, that that which was before true and proper Bread, is become now a true and proper Humane Body; or elſe it is a Miracle without a Miracle, a Myſtery without a Myſtery. Neither is there any hearing of the Word of God, ſeeing the hearing of thoſe Words, *This is my Body*, when their Senſe is indeterminate, is not yet the hearing of the Word of God, but only when their Senſe is fix't and determinate. And it is ſo only, when my Eyes cauſe me to reflect that I hear ſome Words concerning Bread: then the hearing of thoſe Words, *This is my Body*, (whereby could be meant the real Body of Chriſt, if my Eyes ſaw his true Body offered to me,) do now produce in my Mind only the Idea of the Figure of his Body. Becauſe my Eyes do ſee that thoſe Words are only ſpoken of a Sacramental Bread, as thoſe Words, *This is the King*, (whereby could be meant the Perſon of the King, if I ſaw they were ſpoken of the King himſelf) are determined by my Eyes to mean only the Picture of the King, becauſe I ſee they are ſpoken of a Picture.

Thus in like manner, theſe words of Chriſt, *Deſtroy this Temple*, might be meant of the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, as the *Jews* maliciouſly interpreted them, if Chriſt had ſhewed the Temple with his Finger in ſpeaking thoſe Words; and ones Ears ſhould be neceſſarily determined by ones Eyes to ſuch a Senſe. But if Chriſt ſpeaking thoſe Words, touched his own Body with his Finger, one could underſtand by his Words nothing elſe but the Temple of his Body, ſeeing our Ears would be determined by our Eyes to ſuch a Figurative Senſe. Whoever has no regard to this natural Rule of Language, is a falſe Witneſs againſt Truth, as the *Jews* were againſt Chriſt.

Let us apply this Obſervation to the Matter in Hand. As often as the Goſpel takes notice of Chriſt-Man as a God, this word God, which by it ſelf ſhould carry to my Mind the Idea or Notion of the Supream God, does carry always to it but the Idea of a Man, whom God has endowed with his communicable Perfections, and raiſed to a Supream Power: Becauſe the Primitive Facts of the Goſpel compel me to underſtand by this Word, not God himſelf, but his viſible Image, which the Apoſtles have ſeen with their Eyes, and handled with their Hands. For Inſtance, as it ſeems Natural to the Reformed Churches, to explain theſe Words, *This Bread is my Body*, by theſe, *This Bread is the Image and Figure of my Body*; methinks 'tis no leſs obvious to the *Socinians* to explain this Paſſage of St. *John*'s Goſpel, *The Word was God*, by theſe words, *The Word was the expreſs Image of God*. To conteſt the Parity of both theſe Explications would be a great Injuſtice. Thus when *Thomas* ſays, *My Lord and my God*: in theſe Words the Term *God* muſt be taken in a Senſe determined by the Eyes and the Hands of that Apoſtle, who had then thruſt his Hand into the Side of our Saviour; whereby I am taught that he ſpeaks of a Man raiſed from the Dead, and therefore made *God* by the Power of his Reſurrection. *Theodorus* of *Mopſueſta* puts another Senſe upon theſe Words, obſerving however the ſame Rule. Thus he ſays in his Comment upon St. *John*, *Thomas quidem quum ſic credidiſſet, Dominus meus & Deus meus dixit: non ipſum Dominum & Deum dicens (non enim Reſurrectionis ſcientiam docebat, & Deum eſſe qui reſurrexit,) ſed quaſi pro miraculoſo Facto Deum collaudat.* 'Thomas having thus believed, ſaid, 'my Lord and my God, not ſaying that the 'Lord Chriſt was God, (for the knowledge 'of the Reſurrection did not teach him that

'he

' he who was raiſed was God,) but he praiſes ' God as it were for a miraculous Work. Indeed the knowledge of the Reſurrection does not teach that a Man, who dies, and is raiſed from the Dead, is the Supream God, who created Heaven and Earth. So true it is that a Fact which I ſee, and a Thing which I touch, ought to prevail over a Word in order to the Determination of thoſe Words, *My Lord and my God.* Thus when Chriſt ſays, *Before Abraham was, I am:* this Expreſſion might induce me to believe, that Chriſt means a natural manner of Being; were it not that my Ears are determined by my Eyes to excite in my Mind the Idea of quite another Exiſtence, ſince he who ſpeaks thus, is not yet Fifty Years Old, as the *Jews* obſerved. Thus the *Jews* might have perceived, had they been willing to hear him patiently, and for their Inſtruction: but they ſeek to oppoſe him, and tell him, *Thou haſt ſeen Abraham*, which indeed ſhould be underſtood of a Corporeal and Natural Sight: Whereas he had ſaid, that *Abraham had ſeen him*, or rather *his Day*; which could only mean a Moral and Spiritual View. His meaning was, that he was *before Abraham* in the ſame manner as *Abraham had ſeen him, viz.* in the Divine Promiſe, he being the promiſed and deſtinated *Meſſias*. For Faith is a Demonſtration and View of things, that are not ſeen, but are preſent by Promiſe. And thereupon the *Jews*, who waited for a Pretence, make as if they did not underſtand him, and take up Stones to caſt at him. A true Image (to ſay ſo by the way) of all Perſecutors, who put a wrong Senſe upon the beſt things; and of ſtarcht Bigots, who underſtand every thing amiſs, and teſtify againſt the Truth: and that is ſufficient to make one be purſued, condemned, and burnt. I could go on, Sir, in ſuch a way, through the Explication of other controverted Paſſages, eſpecially on the Firſt of *John:* but I hear the Doctor is about a Second Volume, intending to refute the *Socinians* by Scripture, and in a more direct way than he has done: Therefore I expect him, and will not prevent him.

As for Tradition, I do declare beforehand, that if it can be proved, that the Church has been Catholick in Charity as well as in Faith, I admit heartily of ſuch a Tradition. The Orthodox, who will have every one think what they themſelves think, ſhould be aſhamed to ſay, that the Church in all Ages, and the Oecumenical Councils held the ſame Belief, and condemned the contrary. I will not inſiſt upon the Falſhood of this Aſſertion, which has been acknowledged by ſeveral Learned Men; but I anſwer in a Word, that when every one ſhall enjoy the Liberty of examining and ſpeaking what he thinks, without endangering his Reputation, his Eſtate, his Employments, and his Life: then I will confeſs that this Prejudication about Multitude may be well-grounded. But ſince ſuch a Liberty has never been allowed, and the Secular Arm, the Inquiſition, the Croiſado's, and the Penal Laws have endeavoured to ſettle and preſerve the Faith, as far as we are acquainted with it by the Hiſtories of paſt Ages, and of our Own; I am ſo far from being moved by ſuch an Argument, that I am inſpir'd with a juſt Indignation againſt thoſe who dare to uſe it. Faith and Tradition have thus been forced upon Men, and they are ſo at this Day, not only by Violence, but by a conſtrained and unnatural Inſtruction. For they inſert into Catechiſms and Liturgies (which Children read before Scripture) ſome Metaphyſical Scraps to expreſs certain Opinions, which excite ſuch Ideas, as no Rational Man would ever come at by reading the Scripture. For the Natural Impreſſion made by the Apoſtles Creed, offereth not to wiſe and unprejudic'd Men, the Senſe of the Comments, which are at this Day added to it by a fore'd Inſtruction: But ſuch an Inſtruction, though ſtrange and unnatural, becomes ſo natural by a long uſe, that the moſt ſimple Explications of the Word of God are pre-

 ſently

ſently accounted New and Unnatural, when they depart never ſo little from that unlucky Prejudice. Oh! Strange Blindneſs! Men ought not to call ſuch an Explication unnatural, as does not ſtick to the Letter in its ſtrict Senſe; the Letter being capable of a Figurative Senſe, or of any other that is not ſo obvious: But they ought to ſtyle ſo an Explication, which has no regard to the Circumſtances of the Text, the Nature of the Matter in Hand, the Genius and Spirit of the Revelation, the Primitive and Undeniable Doctrines, and what is certain in the Facts mention'd in Scripture, and in the Principles of Natural Notions. Whilſt Proteſtants will not follow ſo ſure and infallible Guides, they will continue divided from one another by reaſon of a Thouſand Diſputes, which keep at a diſtance ſeveral honeſt Men, and lay themſelves open to their Adverſaries the Papiſts.

All the Explications of Scripture made uſe of by the ſeveral Sects of Proteſtants, who look upon it as the Rule of their Faith, *Lutherans*, *Calviniſts*, *Socinians*, &c. make at moſt but probable Senſes, until they uſe thoſe Keys of Solution above mentioned, in relation to the Firſt Truths contained in the Scripture. For the probable Senſes are not ſufficient to ſettle our Faith; we want a certain and undeniable Senſe. We challenge the Doctor to afford us any ſuch, but by explaining the Scripture, either by the help of an infallible Tradition or Judge, if he has any ſuch; or in reſpect to the Primitive and unmoveable Doctrines. Now according to this laſt Method, the Divinity of Chriſt is not ſo much as probable in a Senſe of Nature; whereas the Senſe of Unction and Office is altogether neceſſary. The way therefore to put an end to our Quarrels, is to reduce all things to ſome certain Foundations, upon which we may reſt in examining the reſt. Simple Chriſtians may ſtick to thoſe Primitive Objects, which are the only neceſſary Things; and Divines may make uſe of them as a moſt infallible Rule of Faith, to ſeek for all the other leſs neceſſary, and remote Truths. The Neceſſity of this Maxime does appear by the Uncertainty and Incumbrance of all our Diſputes, eſpecially of this; wherein it's an eaſy thing to ſhew, that according to this way of arguing by the Sole Letter of the Scripture, and the Metaphyſical Reaſonings, which ſet at naught the moſt certain Principles of our Natural Light, under pretence of Myſtery: according to this Method, I ſay, may be proved, (in as plauſible a way as the Trinity is proved,) the moſt abſurd and extravagant Belief of the Corporeal Preſence.

Now, Sir, for the right underſtanding of my way of Reaſoning, you will be pleaſed to remember what I told you more than once; that I have no ſhare in thoſe Factions, which moſt pitifully tear in pieces Chriſtianity; that I am neither a *Papiſt*, nor a *Lutheran*, nor a *Calviniſt*, nor a *Socinian*, &c. I am a Chriſtian I thank God. I ſide only with Truth, and take ſhelter in the Boſom of that Catholick Church, which ſtands independently upon any thing that goes under the Name of a Party. I mean, that I do not give up my Faith to thoſe particular Confeſſions of Faith, which every Sect endeavours to enlarge to an Infinite Bulk. I reſolve my Syſtem into the Creed of the Univerſal Church, which by reaſon of its Antiquity, but eſpecially of the Authority of its Doctrines, is rightly called the Apoſtles Creed, and admitted of all Chriſtians, notwithſtanding their implacable Hatreds and Diviſions. The Learned Dr. *Meggot*, in a Sermon preached before the King and Queen on *Rom.* 12. 5. believes that ſuch a Faith is ſufficient, in order to Salvation, if accompanied with a

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Good and Holy Life. 'All the *Creeds*, 'says he, that the Ancient Church required 'of them she admitted to her Communion 'for some Ages, was only an Acknowledg-'ment of the Articles of the Creed we 'call the Apostles, and prest no more on 'them; and though all Churches since 'have added others, some more, some 'less, it appears by their not judging one 'another, about receiving or not re-'ceiving them, this is not so much from 'any Opinion they have of the Absolute 'Necessity of holding those Articles, as of 'the Absolute Necessity of preserving 'Peace among their own Members, who 'were like to make disturbance about 'them. And again; 'Our Contentions, 'says he, are not about the great vital 'Truths of Christianity, whereunto we 'have all attained, but some additional 'Notions, which if they should be true, 'our Consciences tell us, Men may be 'sav'd, though they don't believe. Thus far the Doctor. In effect one may dispute about those *Additional Notions, Salvâ fide qua Christiani sumus*, as St. *Augustin* says. I should transcribe the Doctor's whole Sermon, if I would set down all that he says in the behalf of this Principle. To this Doctor we may joyn Dr. *Sherlock* himself, who speaks of the Church of *England* thus; (*The Knowledg of Christ, p.* 95.) 'I 'admire, says he, the Wisdom and the 'Honesty of our Church, which in her 'Publick Catechism hath been careful to 'prevent the Cheats and Delusions of 'Fancy; feeds her Children with whol-'som and substantial Food; has taught 'them a Religion without Art and Sub-'tilty; —— hath taught them the Apo-'stles Creed, which contains those Great 'and Essential Articles of Religion, which 'are the necessary Principles of Action, '— without filling their Heads with No-'tions and Artificial Theories of Religion, 'which serve only to make them giddy 'with a vain conceit of Knowledge, to 'talk ill, and to live worse. I am a Pro-testant upon such Terms, and heartily em-brace the Communion of the Church of *England*, independently upon any Faction whatsoever. And sure enough 'tis not a-gainst her I do write, but only against the Doctor's *Three Gods*, and his New Imposi-tion of believing *Self* and *Mutual Consciousness* in order to be saved. On the contra-ry, I do chearfully congratulate that Church, forasmuch as the Doctor did not find in her simple and wise Catechism, (which he justly commends) the Artificial Theo-ries, and New Devices of his *Self* and *Mu-tual Consciousness*, whereby he not only makes Children giddy, but moreover troubles the Brains of the most steady Doctors.

The Rule of my Faith therefore is the Holy Scripture, and (which is all one) the Tradition which is contained in the Apo-stles Creed, which is the Universal Creed of the Christian Church. This Symbol is sufficient: as to other Points, wherewith it is encreased, 'tis the Iniquity of the Age which makes them necessary. If the Protestant Church has the Power to force upon me the Expositions she gives of those Two Rules of my Faith, how much more will the Church of *Rome* lay claim to the same Right? Let them tell me therefore, which of those Two Churches is the Trustee of such Expositions? The Protestant Church pretends, that the Sense which She gives to the Scripture on the Mystery of the Trinity, is of an Apostolical Tradition and unquestionable Evidence, which I ought to submit to. The Church of *Rome* lays the same claim concerning the Exposition of the Mystery of the Eucharist, and main-tains that the Protestants are bound to re-ceive it at her hand. Who shall decide the Question? Let then the pretended Here-ticks alone, or agree first between your selves upon the Point. The Doctor con-fesses himself (*in the Vindication of Dr.* Stil-lingfleet, *pag.* 279.) that the Apostles Creed

is little else than the Explication of the Form of Baptism, what we are to believe of God the Father, what of God the Son, and what of the Holy Ghost. Now if the Creed is the Explication of the Form of Baptism, and contains what we are to believe of the Father, *viz.* that he is the Maker of Heaven and Earth; and of the Son, *viz.* that he was born of a Virgin by the Holy Ghost, *&c.* we ought then to keep to the Primitive and Old Explication of Scripture. And therefore what need is it, to explain that Exposition by a New Exposition contained in the Creed of *Nice*? And this by a Third, contained in the Creed of *Constantinople*? And then by a Fourth, contained in the *Athanasian* Creed? and so infinitely. There were one *Cerinthus*, and other Hereticks, when the Apostles Creed was composed, be it never so old, and therefore the same necessity of expounding the *Eternal Generation*, the *Consubstantiality* and *Hypostasis* then: and yet it clearly appears, that the Creed does not condemn any, but those who held that *Jesus* was a meer Man, born of *Mary* by *Joseph sensu carnali*. And the *Consubstantiality*, which it establisheth, is, that *Jesus* is Consubstantial to Men according to his Birth of the *Virgin*, and Consubstantial to God according to his Conception of the *Holy Ghost*, whereby the Father has in some manner communicated his Essence to him. Since *Consubstantial* is so much in Vogue now adays, here's a very Ancient and Evangelical One, here's the great Mystery of the Christian Religion; a *Messias* born of a *Virgin* by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, having no other *Father* but *God* himself. This is a wonderful Mystery full of Astonishment. Nothing can be conceived more glorious for the Religion and its Author. Such has been in all times the Faith of the People, I mean the Faith of the Apostolical Creed. As to the Creed of *Nice* or *Athanasius*, it was the Faith of those who spoke *Platonick* or *Peripatetick* Philosophy: but which never descended to simple Christians, except perhaps by the means of Blind and implicit Faith. They were both conveyed to us, the One by a Natural Tradition; the Other by a violent One. However there is no reason to look for the Faith of former Ages in the Philosophical Writings of the Fathers: 'tis rather the Scholastick Divinity of those Times. We must look for the common Faith of that Primitive Church in the People themselves; and then indeed we shall find it such as Divine Providence did preserve it in the Apostles Creed. Thus Christ as sent by his Father, his Promises, and his Precepts make up the whole of the Gospel; *For this is Life Eternal, to know Thee the* only *true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* This Abridgment of the Christian Faith contains the whole Mystery of Salvation, and all the main Truths, without which I could not obey the Precepts, nor hope for the Rewards.

The Ancient and Modern *Donatists*, who monopolize Salvation, including it in their Sole Party, are for that very reason *Hereticks*, *Schismaticks*, and excluded out of the Catholick Church. It's to no purpose that the Doctor says, we too much sacrifice to our Reason, because we will have no such Mysteries, as go under so fine a Title, because they are full of Absurdities. Let him say himself, if it be not to build ones Religion (I will not say upon Reason, but) upon the Fancy and Wanderings of Mens Minds, when we make it depend upon our weak Reasonings, and uncertain Consequences. As for us, we acknowledg no other Foundation of Faith, than the Primitive Facts and Truths of the Gospel, which are of such an Evidence and Certainty, as no rational Men can deny. Whereas the Orthodox, who swell Religion and Confessions of Faith, have no other Prop of their Faith, and consequently of their Salvation, than Human Reasonings, distracted Metaphysicks,

taphyſicks, and bold Criticiſm: Means that have not been able, ever ſince they were put in practice, to fix the ſenſe of one ſingle Paſſage. On the contrary, they have hitherto bereav'd us of well received and undoubted Senſes. We muſt therefore take Scripture for the only Rule of our Faith, and admit its Primitive Truths with a clear and diſtinct Belief. But, as to the Truths leſs neceſſary, implicit Faith is ſufficient: that is to ſay, they muſt be received with ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as fits us to believe them explicitely, aſſoon as they appear clearly; and we ought to be fully convinced that they are Scripture-Truths.

This being laid down, Sir, it's no hard matter to reſolve Two Difficulties, the Solution whereof will however appear to you a Paradox. The Firſt is, that the *Papiſts*, who have choſen a wrong Principle, do notwithſtanding agree in the Tradition of their Church: Whereas the Proteſtants, who have a right One, do notwithſtanding diſagree about the Senſe of Scripture. I anſwer, That both of them having enlarged their Confeſſions of Faith with an infinite Number of Opinions, either uſeleſs, or ſtrange, or odious to Religion, and having thereupon laid hold on two different Principles to defend them: Thoſe have had the good luck of chuſing a falſe Principle, whereon their Hereſies are grounded, and conſequently a Principle which clears, confirms and reconciles them; becauſe it is contrived on purpoſe to be the Rule of their Errors. But theſe have had the ill Fortune of chuſing a true Principle, wherein their new Opinions cannot be found, and therefore a Principle, which condemns, confounds, and divides them; becauſe it was not made to be the Rule of their New Doctrines.

The Second Difficulty, which gives a great deal of trouble to ſeveral Men, is, That there are many *Deiſts*, who lead a ſtricter Life, than moſt of thoſe who boaſt ſo much of Chriſtianity. I anſwer, that it may very well be, and this is my Reaſon: Thoſe *Deiſts* ſpoken of, are moſtly well-natured Men, and would not be Deiſts, were they well taught the Chriſtian Religion. So far are Divines from laying open her Beauty to their Eyes, that they keep them back by the ugly Pictures which they draw thereof. Thoſe Men are entertained with abſurd Myſteries, Paſſages of Scripture wreſted, wherein every one finds a ſenſe that favours his Party. Theſe things are a Stumbling-block to Men of Probity and Underſtanding. In effect they are ſincere honeſt-hearted Men, who do good by the impulſe of their Natural Religion, Honeſty and good Conſcience, which have great influence upon them. And there is no doubt but they would give Glory to the Truth of the Goſpel, did it ſhine unto them in its Native Evidence and Simplicity. But it's certain that Religion, as it is now adays beheld, affrights thoſe that are in the neareſt Diſpoſition to Chriſtianity, and whoſe Minds ſeem not fitted to embrace the abſurd Opinions of a Religion. On the contrary, it draws into its Boſom all Worldly-minded Men, who are always in a readineſs to ſubmit their Faith to the moſt monſtrous Myſteries, provided they may not incur the loſs of their darling and cheriſh'd Paſſions. Let their Luſts be but indulged, they will willingly ſacrifice common Senſe, Reaſon, and Faith. Thus Religion has been ſo well ſuited to Worldly Men's Reliſh, that (if I may dare to ſay ſo) moſt wicked Perſons are willingly Chriſtians, and ſeveral honeſt Men are accounted Prophane and Indifferent. Theſe Ill Effects, that ariſe from ſuch a Corruption, are eſpecially to be aſcribed to Teachers. O that God would be pleaſed to bring us back to that ſimple, but efficacious Truth, which had ſo great an Influence upon

upon the first Hearers of the Gospel, and inspire us with a solid Piety, and a true Christian Charity! I shall conclude with this brief, but essential Confession of my Faith, *That after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law, and the Gospel; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the Just and Unjust; and herein do I exercise my self to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Men.* I am,

SIR,

Yours, &c.

FINIS.